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ABSTRACT

The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, invited members of various Departments of Counselor Education at neighboring universities to discuss the current status of Counselor Education. Topics of concern and interest included present and innovative teaching programs; student, client and community needs; shortcomings of training approaches; goals and proposed methods of their achievement. As an outgrowth of this area meeting, a workshop was conducted at the 1975 CPGA Convention, sponsored by the USC Department of Counselor Education. Various invited counselor educators met with an audience composed of counselors with former and current students from various counselor education departments. The problems discussed at this open forum included those that had evolved from the initial meeting prior to the convention. Varying viewpoints were shared relative to the issues under discussion. The most controversial topics presented and discussed were the ineffectiveness of training counselors for appropriate community involvement and lack of continuing education for counselors. Criticisms of training in these areas were strongly voiced, mainly by former students who are currently counseling practitioners. (Author)

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COUNSELOR EDUCATION: A PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE

Section VIII, Workshop 16
Presented at CPGA Convention, 1975

Los Angeles, California

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Introduction

Counselor educators seldom meet to share, to discuss, to motivate each other in any organized fashion. With this in mind, the faculty of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, organized an initial meeting of counselor educators from neighboring universities. At this meeting, which was held on the University of Southern California campus, various topics were discussed pertinent to counselor education programs as they currently exist and as they might be improved ideally and realistically.

Issues discussed included counselor preparation; experimental components of individual and group counseling; supervisory aspects of practicum experiences; the feasibility and implementation of continuing education for counselors, the "ideal" role of the practicing counselor versus current employer expectations, and student, client and community needs relative to effective counselor functioning.

Intense discussion of these concerns indicated a need for further exploration as well as greater involvement and input by students and current counselor-practioners. A workshop at the CPGA Convention in 1975 appeared to be a worthwhile means of continuing and deepening the dialogue. Such a workshop was proposed, accepted and presented in Los Angeles at the CPGA Convention in 1975.

Purpose

The purpose of the workshop was to have counselor educators share their concerns, their views and perceptions of the state of the

art of counselor education with other educators, those currently employed in the counseling profession and with counselor trainees to evolve more effective and relevant approaches to educating counselor candidates.

Method

The faculty of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Southern California and counselor educators from other teaching institutions throughout California, met at the CPGA Convention Workshop 16, Los Angeles, in 1975 to present and discuss vital issues in counselor education among themselves, with former and current students and with practicing counselors.

Initially various teaching formats were demonstrated as taught in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Southern California. These included demonstrations of individual and group counseling sessions, utilizing the audience as subjects.

A volunteer from the audience was solicited and asked to work with a University of Southern California professor on a real, current problem in a simulated individual counseling session while the entire audience observed the interaction. A young, male counselor candidate agreed to share his concerns over his suitability to become an effective counselor. The USC professor, following a humanistic existential orientation, counseled with him for approximately twenty minutes. At the conclusion of the abbreviated session, the professor dialogued with the audience. The demonstration was critiqued by the counselor educators and audience as to the process and theory demonstrated. This same procedure was followed for a group counseling demonstration with half a dozen audience volunteers participating.

During both critiques, the emphasis was upon the experimental components, the process and the theoretical orientation and philosophy as they are currently implemented to educate counselor candidates at USC. This allowed for a microcosmic approach to sharing training methods with the opportunity of criticism for improvement of these methods from other counselor educators and the audience.

Also presented was a brief didactic explanation of the format employed at USC in teaching the counseling practioners. Another USC professor outlined the resource method for acquiring clients for students, the observation through one-way mirrors of counselor candidates doing counseling and the ensuing critique of their sessions. Basic to this approach utilized at USC, is the emphasis, during the critique, on the gaining of increased self-awareness by the counselor candidate. Here again it was emphasized that the training method at USC is not solely didactic, but experimental as well. The presentation of this format allowed other counselor educators to examine their current teaching practices for possible revision and the inclusion of innovative practices.

Next, a panel of educators discussed their main concerns regarding counselor education as it relates to the "ideals" sought in the profession as well as the existing realities. The audience also eagerly shared in this dialogue.

A major point vehemently expressed by practicing counselors was that often administrative expectations were at odds with counselors' training, i.e., counselors were trained to counsel but all too often they were asked to fill the roles of clerks or do tasks better assigned

to paraprofessionals. One suggestion arising from this complaint was that workshops be held for administrators to appraise them of the professional functions and skills of counselors. Another suggestion to cope with this problem of underutilization of professional counselor skills was that, as part of a counselor education program, there be included methodology in making institutional change. Such curriculum content was titled by one member of the audience as, "How to Survive and Make Impact As A New Breed Counselor."

As a consequence of the concern and dissatisfaction with counselors often being relegated to technical and clerical tasks, another suggestion was explored. It was posited that continuing education for counselors might be an effective means for inspiring counselors to continue educating administrators as to the value and implementation of professional counseling skills. This would add to the education of administrators as well as maintaining and increasing the professional fervor and commitment of counselors who often feel discouraged and abandoned once they are in the field. Such continuing education programs might provide needed inspiration as a professional and, as one audience member stated, "help to keep and renew the faith of counseling."

Following this, the discussion focused on the failure, as viewed by the audience, of counselor educators to adequately prepare counselors for effective community involvement, primarily in working with minorities.

It was felt that course content had neglected, to a large degree, emphasis on the socio-economic factors involved in working with cultural minorities. Chicano and Black counselors especially expressed strong dissatisfaction with the narrow attention paid to working and

counseling with minorities. Strong sentiment was voiced in what was termed the provincial outlook of "WASP" educators and counselors in their approach to culturally different clients. Most counselor educators reluctantly agreed that this was the case and were amenable to rectify the situation through curriculum change.

Concluding the workshop was a brief summary by each of the counselor educators as to the specific ideas and suggestions presented which had the greatest impact and feasiblity for implementation in their programs. The commitment of counselor educators incorporating the various aspects of the workshop proposals was enthusiastically voiced along with hearty appreciation for the audience's participation. In turn, the members of the audience endorsed the need and value of the exchange that had occurred.

Conclusions

Counselor Educators: A Professional Dialogue, proved to be a highly effective, well received and significant workshop. The necessity for an exchange among counselor educators, students and practioners was evident. Counselor educators were able to examine, evaluate and share ideas and teaching methods to improve their competency as educators; students were able to express their needs, satisfactions and dissatisfactions with existing programs and give workable suggestions for program improvements. Practitioners were able, in retrospect, to point up hazards, shortcomings and benefits of their educational programs. In addition, practicing counselors were able to give input and to stress the need for supportive follow-up throughout their counseling careers. Such a professional dialogue appeared to have enormous value for all concerned and emphasized the need for the implementation of further workshops and presentations of this nature.